

Muslim group says Saudis hold its leader

AMMAN (R) — Saudi Arabia has arrested the head of an Islamic group and three of his aides while they were in the kingdom on pilgrimage, an Islamic Jihad official said Monday. "They were arrested last week on a tip from somebody who broke away from them but they have no relation to anything concerning Saudi security," said Sheikh As'ad Bayoud Al Tamimi, leader of Islamic Jihad's Beit Al Maqdes. Sheikh Tamimi told Reuters Saudi security agents seized the leader of another Islamic Jihad splinter group called the Islamic Jihad Movement for the Liberation of Palestine (Al Aqsa Battalions) and three of his aides in Jeddah last week. He identified the group's leader as Fayed Al Asswad and the three others as Ziyad Abu Shmeih, Adnan Abu Saeed and Hani Abu Da'bata. He said they travel between Jordan and Sudan. A fourth member of the group, Kaysar Rajab Sarsour Al Tamimi, was released shortly after questioning, said Sheikh Tamimi, a distant cousin of the released man. Saudi embassy officials were not available for confirmation of the report. Mr. Asswad's group in a statement announcing the detention of their leader did not mention any other arrests.

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Arab committee on Lockerbie to meet

TUNIS (R) — An Arab League committee will meet in Tunis Thursday in a fresh attempt to solve Libya's standoff with the West over the Lockerbie affair, official sources in Tunisia said. Foreign ministers from Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania and Libya, all committee members, will meet with Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid. Diplomats in Tunis said the meeting comes ahead of an April 15 deadline for a U.N. review of Lockerbie and sanctions imposed on Libya for non-cooperation.

6 Kurds killed in Iranian attack

PARIS (R) — The wife of French President Francois Mitterrand said Monday at least six Kurdish civilians were killed and many hurt when Iranian planes bombed a French-run hospital on the Iran-Iraq border at the weekend. Danielle Mitterrand, head of the privately-funded human rights group France-Libertes, told reporters searches were under way for more bodies in the debris of the hospital at Rania after air raids on Saturday and Sunday. Mrs. Mitterrand said the hospital was on Iraqi soil, in an area controlled by the rebel Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) and inside the Western allies' air exclusion zone set up to protect Iraqi Kurds. "We protest against this aggression in the allied protection zone," Mrs. Mitterrand said. The hospital is jointly run by the French humanitarian groups aide Medicale Internationale and Medecins du Monde, who protested against the bombing in a statement earlier Monday.

Egyptian forces raid island, hold 150

CAIRO (AP) — Police raided a small island in the Nile River Monday in a security operation that resulted in the death of a policeman and the arrest of 150 suspected Muslim extremists hiding there, a police officer said. Police and the extremists exchanged fire during the dawn sweep, he said. The government's Middle East News Agency (MENA) quoted an unnamed security official as saying two extremists were wounded and taken to hospital. The militants were hiding in the fields and among dense trees of Baday Island near Aswan, a hotbed of extremist violence 320 kilometres south of Cairo.

Senegalese riot over election results

DAKAR (R) — Students burnt cars, smashed buses and stoned paramilitary gendarmes in Senegal's capital Monday in protest at elections they say were rigged. Witnesses said the rioting flared Sunday night near the campus of Dakar's university and continued on Monday morning. Gendarmes responded with tear-gas. It was not clear if there were any injuries. The students were angry at election results announced on Saturday which gave incumbent President Abdou Diouf a sweeping win over his nearest rival, opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade. "This Israeli commitment will

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

Settlers try to storm Syrian border

KUNEITRA CHECKPOINT, Occupied Golan Heights (R) — Israeli police battled scores of Jewish settlers opposed to withdrawal from the Golan Heights who tried Monday to storm across the ceasefire line with Syria, security sources said. United Nations troops who have guarded the frontier since 1974 blocked the crossing near the destroyed Syrian town of Kuneitra with armoured personnel carriers as police forced settlers back. Several settlers were detained. Golan settlers, totalling about 15,000, were angered by news reports that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is prepared to return the strategic plateau Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 war in exchange for peace. Mr. Rabin had said he was willing to return only part of the Golan but recently added it was hard to explain why Israel should keep some Syrian territory when it returned all occupied Syrian land for peace with Cairo. The Haaretz newspaper reported Monday a senior government minister said Mr. Rabin would agree to a total withdrawal from the plateau in exchange for suitable security arrangements. The settlers rushed the border with Syria, saying they wanted to negotiate "peace for peace" with President Hafez Al Assad rather than exchange the land for a peace treaty.

Clinton meets Rabin, sees 'real chance' for Mideast peace talks

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President Bill Clinton said Monday there was a real chance to get Middle East peace talks going again as he held his first meeting as president with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"There are a lot of reasons to be hopeful," he said at a photo session in the Oval Office.

He conceded there were difficulties, and he said he hoped a recent flare-up of violence, including the stabbing of an American immigrant in Israel, would not present an obstacle to the renewal of talks.

The meeting came as the U.S. administration prepared an expanded role in the negotiations.

Asked about chances for the talks resuming if Israel does not agree to a Palestinian demand to repatriate 396 Palestinians expelled to Lebanon in December, Mr. Clinton said: "I think we've got a real chance to resume the talks. I certainly hope we do."

"Obviously there are difficulties and there are those who would prefer it not be done, but I think we have a real shot" at talks leading to a lasting peace, he said.

The talks, interrupted since December, resume here on April 20 although the Palestinians have not said whether they will attend.

Last year Mr. Rabin authorised his negotiators to sound out the Syrians on what kind of peace they might extend to Israel in exchange for territory.

Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher talked with Syrian

Palestinians may ask Arabs to boycott talks

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) will ask Arab foreign ministers in Damascus this month to boycott the next round of Middle East peace talks if a crisis over expellees remains unresolved, a PLO official said Monday.

The PLO will demand in the Damascus meeting that all Arab delegations refrain from resuming negotiations on the 20th of April in the event of not finding a solution to the deportee problem, "Saieh Rafat, a member of the Palestine Central Council, told Reuters.

The foreign ministers of Syria, Lebanon and Jordan are scheduled to meet in Damascus on March 28 to hammer out a common position with the PLO on the next round of peace talks.

The Palestinians have refused to accept an invitation to the talks. The other Arab participants are waiting until they received a positive American reply to a proposal aimed at resolving the expellee problem in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 799 and Israeli pledges not to expel any more of negotiations.

"This Israeli commitment will

President Hafez Al Assad last month in Damascus. Mr. Clinton said on Monday that Mr. Christopher had done a commendable job.

The Syrian president is known to be willing to have Israel relinquish in phases the Syrian territory occupied in the 1967 war, provided Israel accepts Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

Asked Monday if he envisioned peace between Israel and Syria, Mr. Clinton said: "I hope the peace process will resolve shortly. I'm hopeful it will produce a good result. I think there's a chance of it."

Asked about incidents of increased violence, including the stabbing and wounding in northern Israel of a man who immigrated from New York a month ago, Mr. Clinton said:

"I heard about it. I'm disturbed about it. I hope it won't deter any of the parties involved from seeking a genuine long-term peace. The larger interests still argue for having a good faith effort in the peace process."

Monday's meeting with Mr. Rabin "is an opportunity for the two leaders to sit face-to-face and get to know each other," White House spokesman Jeff Elder said Sunday.

Diplomats say the plan includes a clear commitment by Israel of no further expulsions, something the Jewish state is reluctant to do.

PLO sources say they could be flexible on details of the return of 396 Palestinians still stranded in the peace talks.

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Hekmatyar wants to fire Masoud

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (R) — Afghan Prime Minister-designate Gulbuddin Hekmatyar said Monday he would sack his arch-rival Ahmad Shah Masoud from the powerful post of defence minister.

Mr. Hekmatyar, appointed under a March 7 peace pact aimed at stopping months of factional fighting in Kabul, said his first major task was to ensure the surrender of arms to a joint defence commission of all parties.

"No-one will surrender arms to the one who has fought against him in the past," he said, giving reasons why he planned to sack Mr. Masoud as defence minister.

"Masoud is our brother," Mr. Hekmatyar said. "We do not want to ignore or forget him." But he added: "The Ministry of Defence will not be given to a single party... so a non-controversial man will be acceptable."

Mr. Hekmatyar, the 44-year-old radical leader of the Hezb-e-Islami party, is to select his cabinet this week in consultation with President Burhanuddin Rabbani in the run-up to elections due in eight months.

Diplomats have predicted more fighting unless Mr. Hekmatyar and Mr. Rabbani can agree on who should be defence minister. Mr. Rabbani, 53, has previously refused to consider allowing Mr. Masoud, the most powerful commander in his Jamiat-e-Islami party, to step down.

"It is my desire that not a single bullet should be fired and not a drop of blood be shed in the transfer of power," Mr. Hekmatyar told a news conference.

Mr. Hekmatyar's hardline forces have engaged government troops loyal to Mr. Masoud in bloody battles for possession of Kabul since the Mujahideen took power from the former communist government last April. Thousands of civilians have been killed.

The two were classmates at Kabul University in the 1970s and bitter rivals throughout the 14-year insurgency against the Soviet-installed government.

The position of Mr. Masoud, who has been defence minister since the Mujahideen took power, is crucial to peace and was the main stumbling block in this month's peace accord, diplomats say.

Prosecutors showed the court



Israeli soldiers check Palestinians at a Gaza Strip roadblock (above) and (below) armed settlers and volunteers work in farms after settlers fired Palestinian workers en masse Sunday (AFP photo)



Fadlallah says no Muslim role in New York blast

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's top fundamentalist leader ruled out Monday any role by Muslim militants in the World Trade Centre bombing in New York and suggested Israel was to blame.

Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah said the attack served none of the fundamentalists' goals and would only lead to curbs on their freedoms. He said Israel was the only party to gain from the Feb. 26 blast and so was probably behind it.

"The bombing is a Jewish and not Islamic matter for a simple reason: Islamists don't benefit anything from it because Islamists living in the United States have freedom of movement," Sheikh Fadlallah said.

"The United States, which fights the freedom of peoples in the Third World through regimes to it, grants freedom to these people when they emigrate to the United States," he told Reuters in an interview at his home.

"Islamists in the United States ... have no interest, not even one per cent, in bombing the World Trade Centre," he said.

Sheikh Fadlallah, 56, said Israel was the only apparent beneficiary because it wanted to show that it was the only power

able to protect Americans from Muslims and to divert world attention from a crisis over the Palestinians it had expelled to Lebanon.

"This leads us to think the American administration ... should pursue this possibility and it might find the major criminal inside the Jewish circle in America," he said.

"If you want to know the criminals then know who benefits from this case," said the cleric, widely reported to be the spiritual mentor of Lebanon's pro-Iranian Hezbollah, although he denies it.

Investigations into the bombing have increasingly focused on a fundamentalist group, Al Qama's Al Islamiya, whose spiritual leader preaches in New Jersey and opposes Egypt's government.

Two of the three suspects arrested in connection with the blast that killed five people and injured more than 1,000, are followers of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, who faces deportation from the United States.

Sheikh Fadlallah said U.S. President Bill Clinton appeared closer to Israel than his predecessor George Bush on a level that made Mr. Clinton incapable of being sponsor of Middle East peace talks.

(Continued on page 5)

Police chief sentenced to die in Moroccan sex trial

RABAT (Agencies) — A senior Moroccan police officer, who confessed to having sex with 518 women and girls over a period of three years.

Mr. Tabet, who has 10 days to appeal, filmed the orgies with two remote-controlled video cameras hidden in his flat and kept a numbered list of his sex partners on a computer.

Dressed in smart suits and always with a walkie-talkie, the burly and balding Tabet picked up women in the street and bought them pastries before taking them to his flat, lawyers said.

In several cases he demanded sex in return for issuing passports or other official documents.

A doctor, one of 16 accomplices on trial with Mr. Tabet, was jailed for two years on charges of replacing the hymens of virgins deflowered by the police chief.

Muslim fundamentalists demanded death by stoning or crucifixion, rather than by firing squad — the usual method.

Prosecutor Nourredine Riahi told the court Mr. Tabet, married with two wives and five children was a "criminal machine" and said that "if there was a more severe punishment (than death) the public prosecutor would have demanded it."

Prosecutors showed the court 118 pornographic videos of Mr.

Motorist kills 2 settlers in W. Bank

ELI, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — A Palestinian motorist killed two Israeli settlers near the Jewish settlement of Eli in the occupied West Bank Monday, igniting angry protests by Jewish settlers.

The two Israelis, both in their 20s, were walking beside the road 45 kilometres north of Jerusalem when a speeding vehicle hit them from behind, the army said.

Security forces said it was unclear whether the incident was a political attack or a hit-and-run accident.

Elsewhere, Israeli troops shot and wounded 12 Palestinians in clashes in the occupied Gaza Strip. Palestinians stabbed and wounded two Israelis in separate attacks and an Israeli shot and wounded a Druze Arab he mistook for a guerrilla in the occupied Golan Heights.

The army said the vehicle that killed the two Israelis, a minibus, had been left in the nearby village of Yatma and belonged to the driver's father.

An Eli resident said he gave chase, firing his pistol in the air and at the vehicle.

Settlers said they were certain the driver meant to kill and accused Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government of failing to protect them.

They assailed Mr. Rabin for discussing Arab-Israeli peace with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington Monday at a time of rising violence.

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Iran said doing massive sanction-busting business

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran is sending food worth millions of dollars into Iraq in return for cement and fertiliser in sanction-busting trade that is helping the regime stay in power, travellers from the two countries say.

The sources, who include diplomats and businessmen, told the Associated Press that the barter-trade centres on the border towns of Khisrawi, 130 kilometres northeast of Baghdad, and Khorramshahr, near the southern city of Basra.

"Every day trucks packed with goods line up on the border where Iranian officials join them to escort the convoys into Khasrawi. Iranian merchants wait for them there and conduct the barter deals," said one Arab businessman who visited Khasrawi recently.

Western intelligence officials noted a few weeks ago that as many as 200 trucks a day were hauling foodstuffs and other essentials into Iraq from Iran in defiance of the U.N. trade sanctions imposed on Iraq in August 1990 after it invaded Kuwait.

They said they expected that volume to increase following the closure of smuggling routes through Jordan at one time Iraq's main trade route, in recent

(Continued on page 5)

Serbs continue push, vow not to let aid into village

Srebrenica who were monitored in Sarajevo.

Gen. Morillon planned to meet Gen. Mladic at a "neutral site," according to a U.N. statement.

Gen. Morillon has pledged to stay in Srebrenica until besieged Serbs allow truck convoys in with food and medicine and permit the evacuation of scores of sick and wounded people.

The Bosnian Serb military command has rejected those demands as long as Gen. Morillon stays in Srebrenica, an official at U.N. headquarters in Zagreb, Croatia, said.

The U.N. statement stressed Gen. Morillon had every intention of "remaining in the Srebrenica area for the foreseeable future."

The ham radio operators said Gen. Morillon left behind about 15 U.N. officials at his temporary headquarters in the town.

Laurence Jolles, a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees official who left Srebrenica Sunday, said up to 40 people were dying of cold and hunger daily.

"I have seen scenes I would never have expected in the 20th century," Mr. Jolles told the Associated Press. "Thousands of women and children living

(Continued on page 5)

Somali peace conference launched in Addis Ababa

ADDIS ABABA (AP) — A new round of Somali peace talks opened Monday with faction leaders of the civil war-wrecked country still at odds over whether to create a national government.

They said, however, they were willing to form regional authorities that U.N. officials say are needed for relief and reconstruction efforts to continue.

As he entered Africa Hall, Ali Mahdi Mohammad, self-proclaimed Somalian president who claims to represent coalition of 11 factions, called for a transitional government.

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JORDAN TIMES, TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 1993

Muslim group says FBI watched it for months

By Jeanne King
Reuter

NEW YORK — A group of fundamentalist Muslims allegedly linked to the World Trade Centre bombing say they have been under intense surveillance by federal authorities since September, months before the current investigation.

The group has denied any involvement in the Feb. 26 bombing that killed five and injured more than 1,000. Their lawyer contends that, given the close surveillance, the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) would have known if the group had been planning an attack.

A Brooklyn Muslim activist, who asked that he be identified only as Ahmad, said the investigation centred on members who attended two mosques frequented by Al Sayyid Nosair and tied to Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman, an Egyptian cleric calling for the overthrow of the Egyptian government.

Mr. Nosair was acquitted of killing radical Rabbi Meir Kahane in 1991 but is serving a prison sentence in connection with other charges stemming from the shooting.

The investigation into the bombing has focused increasingly on the Muslim group and possible ties to the Kahane killing. Authorities are also looking into money transfers from Europe that they believed helped finance the bombing.

Ahmad told Reuters that about 24 people who frequented a mosque in Brooklyn and one in Jersey City, New Jersey, had been subpoenaed last September for questioning over their links to Mr. Nosair and Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

Two of the suspects who have been arrested in connection with the bombing are said to be followers of Sheikh Abdul Rahman, who is facing deportation from the United States.

The first man arrested, Mohammad Salameh, was a worshippers at the Jersey City mosque, while the second, Ibrahim AL Gabrwny, worshipped in Brooklyn. Mr. Gabrwny is also Mr. Nosair's cousin.

Newsweek magazine reports this week that U.S. intelligence officials believe Iran may have been funneling money to Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

Nidal Ayyad, the chemical engineer also being held in the investigation, has ties to Mr. Salameh but authorities have not shown any ties between Mr. Ayyad and the Muslim fundamentalist group.

One of Mr. Nosair's lawyers, Michael Warren, told Reuters that members of the two mosques

were under such close scrutiny that they could not have pulled off the deadly bombing.

"These people have been under intense surveillance by the FBI, the joint task force and the local police department for the last two-and-a-half years," Mr. Warren said in an interview.

"Why didn't authorities know at the inception of the investigation who was responsible for the blast?" Mr. Warren said.

Ahmad said that he and "other Muslim brothers" have been under surveillance "day and night since September," and he also questioned how any of them could have pulled off the crime.

"They have followed us. They have pictures of us coming out of the mosque. We know our telephones are tapped because during the questioning some of us were asked if we recognised a voice on the phone," he said.

FBI spokesman Joe Valiquette



FLASHPOINT: Egyptian security forces guard a church in Qalyoub, 40 kilometres north of Cairo, after protesters set it ablaze, triggering a confrontation with security forces (AFP photo)

Algerian party says officials quit

ALGIERS (R) — More than 500 elected Algerian councillors have resigned in protest after the government offered an amnesty to Muslim fundamentalists, the secular Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD) party said.

They wanted to know why I visited Nosair in jail and what we talked about. They asked how long I knew him, where I met him, and was it before or after the Kahane shooting," Ahmad said.

He said they also questioned him about Sheikh Abdul Rahman. "They kept referring to him as 'that ex-con,'" he said.

The sheikh had been in prison in Egypt for political activities. He was cleared of charges that he was involved in the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

Imam Warith Deen Umar, responsible for Islamic affairs for the New York State Corrections Department, said that he has been warned to stop having contact with Mr. Nosair's family.

He told Reuters he was warned by Correction Department First Deputy Commissioner Philip Coombe to "back off and not interfere in the FBI investigation."

He was told that otherwise he "would be investigated as being involved in the conspiracy to blow up the World Trade Centre."

The RCD has not yet said whether it will attend the talks.

Unions call for protest strikes in south Yemen

ADEN (YEMEN (R)) — Labour unions in southern Yemen Monday called for a general strike and street marches to protest at the government's failure to pay public sector wages for the past three months.

A statement from the labour unions called for a one-day strike Tuesday and urged demonstrators to march to government offices on March 20.

About 4,000 angry employees of seven state-owned factories in the south took to the streets of Aden Sunday to demand wages owed them since January.

Similar protests sparked food riots in the northern part of Yemen last December in which 12 people were killed, but the unrest did not spread to the south.

The new crisis is ill-timed for the government which is preparing for general elections in April, the first in Yemen since the north and the south merged in 1990.

Government employees in southern Yemen, including the armed forces, police and teachers, say they have not been paid for three months because the central bank complains it has no cash.

Party leader Said Sadi, in a bitter attack two weeks ago, said Mr. Abdul Salam must step down for the good of the country.

"Abdul Salam has made his choice, he is for an Islamic state," said Said in a newspaper interview.

The mass resignation coincided with the start of talks between the collective presidency, which appointed Mr. Abdul Salam, and political parties to seek a way out of Algeria's economic and social crisis.

On Saturday, the Cooperative and Agricultural Credit Bank closed its branch in the southern province of Abyan, saying it could not get cash from the central bank.

Central Bank Deputy Governor Abdul Aziz Basudan told Reuters in Aden the bank's branch had received money from Sanaa and would start paying wages soon.

He refused to reveal the reason for the cash shortage.

Residents reported daily queues formed by people struggling to withdraw their money from banks in many parts of southern Yemen. Many institutions were no longer depositing their daily earnings in banks for lack of confidence.

The union statement blamed the crisis on the government and urged it to take quick measures to "curb the insane rise in prices, solve the public sector problem by providing cash to pay public sector employees including the armed forces and police."

It also demanded action to deal with high unemployment.

The statement said the crisis was partly due to the government's policy of centralising decisions in the north since the merger and the erosion of the powers of local authorities.

The London-based Al Hayat newspaper Monday said members of the armed forces had recently issued an appeal to the government to pay their wages or face "dire consequences."

There was no independent confirmation of the paper's report.

One year on, no new clues in Israeli embassy bombing

BUENOS AIRES (R) — Though nearly one year after a car bomb razed the Israeli embassy and killed 29 people, no new clues have emerged as to who carried out the attack, but the Argentine foreign minister said Sunday the investigation would continue.

Foreign Minister Guido di Tella, in response to a local newspaper's report the supreme court was about to drop its investigation, said the case would not be closed.

"The case will continue open because one can never rule out that new evidence will turn up," he told reporters at La Tablada cemetery.

Mr. Di Tella and Israeli Ambassador Yitzhak Shefi, speaking after a ceremony at a Jewish cemetery in memory of the victims of the March 17,

Along with local Jewish community leaders and about 500 people, they attended the ceremony to witness the unveiling of a monument in memory of the fallen in the bombing attack.

Another ceremony of remembrance will be held Wednesday on the site where the Israel embassy once stood in an elegant neighbourhood in central Buenos Aires.

In the investigation, worked on by specialists from seven different countries, it was discovered the bomb was placed in a pick-up truck parked right in front of the embassy just before it blasted the building.

Violence flared again in the southeast Sunday when PKK fighters ambushed a patrol in Mardin province, killing five soldiers and wounding eight others, officials said Monday.

Word of a possible change in policy by PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan surfaced Saturday when Iraqi Kurdish officials said Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani had written to Turkish leaders about his recent talks with Mr. Ocalan.

Mr. Talabani's letter said Mr. Ocalan might meet dissent from PKK hardliners if he tried to move towards a peaceful settlement.

"In the organisation, there will be people who will not go along with this. But it is important that this person (Ocalan) says 'I'm ending it,'" Hurriyet quoted Mr. Demirel as saying.

Hurriyet said Mr. Ocalan's brother Osman, Cemil Bayik, chief of the PKK's military wing, and Semdin Sakik, said to command about 1,000 guerrillas, might defy any call to lay down arms.

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Demirel said Mr. Ocalan might meet dissent from PKK hardliners if he tried to move towards a peaceful settlement.

"In the organisation, there will be people who will not go along with this. But it is important that this person (Ocalan) says 'I'm ending it,'" Hurriyet quoted Mr. Demirel as saying.

Hurriyet said Mr. Ocalan's brother Osman, Cemil Bayik, chief of the PKK's military wing, and Semdin Sakik, said to command about 1,000 guerrillas, might defy any call to lay down arms.

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Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday meets with Assistant Under Secretary of the British

Foreign Office for Middle Eastern Affairs Michael Burton (second from right) (Petra photo)

Sharif Zeid discusses region with visiting British envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Monday received Assistant Under Secretary of the British Foreign Office for Middle Eastern Affairs Michael Burton and reviewed with him bilateral relations.

Sharif Zeid and Mr. Burton also reviewed the latest developments in the region, including the Middle East peace process and the obstacles facing it.

The role of Jordan and Britain in achieving a just and comprehensive settlement based on the United Nations resolutions and principles of international legitimacy was also reviewed.

Both sides agreed that the expellees crisis poses an obstacle to the peace process and emphasized its importance.

Such talks, he said, help the British government to better understand the Jordanian position towards all issues of interest to this region.

He added that the positions of Jordan and Britain towards such topics are similar to a great extent.

Mr. Burton voiced hope that end to the expellees crisis would be reached soon, saying that some progress has been made.

He stressed Britain's support for U.N. Security Council Resolution 799.

In a press statement following the meeting, Mr. Burton said his talks with Sharif Zeid and senior Jordanian officials were excellent.

On the contacts which took place recently between the British government and Palestinian officials, Mr. Burton said his government feels that it was time to use its influence to convince all parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), to resume the Middle East peace talks.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs Kamel Abu Jaber and Minister of State for Prime Minister Affairs Ibrahim Izzidine, as well as British Ambassador to Jordan Patrick Evers.

An Islamist and a secularist debate the women's rights issue

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Independent Islamists and secularist activists were unanimous Sunday over the need to exert more efforts towards achieving social justice, and expressed concern over the violation of women's rights in the Arab countries; but they differed over the terms and means to achieve this end.

"Would religion be of any profit to our people if it failed to achieve justice between them?", questioned Islamist Deputy Leith Shebelat at a seminar held at the University of Jordan, organised by Amnesty International — Jordan branch.

"If we forced a woman out (of her job) to replace her by a man, it will not be considered as an aggression upon humanity but an aggression upon the divine power (Allah) itself," he said.

Jordanian researcher and writer Suhaib Al Tal explained to the audience, of which students comprised the majority, the different kinds of violations of women's rights in the country, concentrating mainly upon the effect of the traditional mentality on women, propped up by "discriminating laws."

"Over 60 per cent of the employees at the Ministry of Education are women; however, the percentage of those (women) who attained senior posts does not exceed 12 per cent," Ms. Al Tal said.

"We (the society) prefer to ignore these practices. Not only that, but we keep reiterating instead, that there is no discrimination against women."

While Ms. Al Tal considered the need to abolish all kinds of discrimination against women as highly important — partially by raising public awareness and partially by abiding by international charters and agreements — Deputy Shebelat viewed her point as concentrating on a "specific issue" instead of working for the general cause."

Mr. Shebelat questioned: "Have we really come to the stage where human rights are protected to demand women's rights?" "I don't claim that women are not suppressed," he continued. "However, we have to realize that all the notions and slogans promoted by the United Nations, that we innocently take as notions of liberty and freedom, are but mere tools used to serve their interests... and whoever deviates from the planned path designed for him is going to be outcast."

Rejecting what he termed as deceitful slogans, Mr. Shebelat warned of double standards used by the West and the dangers that would befall under developed societies if they followed them. "One might say why don't we accept the principles and slogans that correspond to our aspirations and ambitions... we say that we will accept them when they originate from a civilisation based upon humanitarian not discriminatory principles and have respect for the individual, regardless of his colour, religion, race or sex."

Not only did Ms. Al Tal voice disapproval of Mr. Shebelat's interpretation of the human rights principles declared and promoted by the West, but so did some members of the audience. One participant accused Mr. Shebelat of being "a rejectionist of human rights."

"If I am not an advocate of human rights..." Mr. Shebelat answered then paused dramatically.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Scientific exhibition of projects designed by students at the Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), including computers and computer programmes, at JUST.
- ★ Exhibition entitled "Memory of Silk," displaying traditional Jordanian and Palestinian costumes, shawls, carpets, pottery copperware, from the Widad Kawar collection — at the French Cultural Centre.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

King hosts iftar for journalists, academicians

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday hosted an iftar banquet in honour of journalists, artists, university presidents, academicians, and scientific societies. The banquet was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal, Prince Ali and Prince Hamzeh, the King's Military Secretary His Royal Highness Prince Talal Ben Mohammad, His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief Khaled Al Karaki, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, and the King's Private Chamberlain Prince Ali Ben Nayef. The banquet was also attended by Higher Education Minister Awad Khleifat, Information Minister Mahmoud Al Sharif and Minister of Culture Mahmoud Al Samra. King Hussein and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together.

Crown Prince condoles Khrisat family

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown

Prince Hassan Monday delegated the governor of Balqa to convey his condolences to the Khrisat family on the death of Kayed Saleh Khrisat.

Princess Alia inspects voluntary societies in Karak

KARAK (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein, the Honorary President of the Rural Women Development and Rehabilitation Society, Monday inspected conditions of voluntary societies in the villages of Majarrat, Taybeh and Iraik in Karak governorate and was briefed about the services offered by these societies. Princess Alia met with heads of local councils who reviewed services needed, particularly in areas of maternal and child care.

House unable to meet, lack of quorum

AMMAN (Petra) — The Lower House of Parliament did not meet Monday as scheduled because of lack of quorum. Only 52 deputies were in attendance; two less than the legal quorum.

Queen inaugurates local costume exhibit

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday inaugurated an exhibition of Jordanian and Palestinian costumes, from the collection of Mrs. Widad Kawar, at the French Cultural Centre, and Mrs. Kawar.

Accompanying Her Majesty were Her Royal Highness Princess Ghida Talal and Her Highness Princess Wijdan Ali.

Invited to the inauguration were various ambassadors and their spouses, as well as some heads of U.N. organisations and cultural centres.

The Queen was received by Mr. Denis Bauchard, France's

UNRWA funding gap could mean reduced services to refugees

VIENNA (UNRWA) — UNRWA may soon be forced to reduce its services to Palestine refugees if we do not receive additional contributions to cover the projected 1993 budget deficit," Commissioner-General Iler Turkmen announced yesterday at an extraordinary meeting of the Agency's Advisory Commission which met to discuss a funding appeal issued by UNRWA on Feb. 25.

During the meeting, the Commissioner-General emphasised the need to avoid carrying the deficit forward into next year.

Participants were cautious in their assessment of the prospects for obtaining additional contributions in light of the financial circumstances faced by many countries.

The Advisory Commission stressed the importance of UNRWA's efforts to expand its donor base, particularly through the Commissioner-General's recent visits to several Gulf countries, whose combined contributions currently account for about 1.5% of the agency's total income.

Arab members of the Advisory Commission cautioned against any reduction in services and encouraged the agency to place the problem of its deficit before the international community.

UNRWA faces a shortfall of some \$28.5 million in its regular and emergency programmes which provide basic education, primary health care and relief and social services to cover 2.7 million Palestine refugees.

The 10-member Advisory Commission supported Commissioner-General Turkmen's appeal for funds.

Chairman of the Advisory Commission Ambassador Marel

Tremmeau of France, stated that UNRWA was of particular importance to the United Nations system, and that the Palestine problem was not only a political problem but a human one as well.

He expressed the hope that the shortfall could be reduced and emphasised the need to avoid carrying the deficit forward into next year.

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Minister of Finance Basel Jardaneh (third from right) and U.S. Charge D'Affaires in Jordan Douglas Keene Monday sign a \$30 million loan agreement to help Jordan purchase American wheat (Petra photo)

Jordan, U.S. sign \$30m loan agreement to buy American wheat

AMMAN (USIS) — A loan agreement for \$30 million to help Jordan purchase about 20,000 metric tonnes of wheat from private U.S. sources was signed yesterday by Minister of Finance Basel Jardaneh and U.S. Charge D'affaires in Jordan Douglas Keene.

The soft financial loan is being

provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

It is being extended at the soft interest rate of 2 per cent for the first seven years, and at 3 per cent thereafter.

Re-payment will begin following a grace period of 7 years in 24 annual installments.

The cash generated from the local sale of the wheat will be deposited in an interest-bearing account in the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) and the income generated will be spent on agricultural development projects mutually agreed upon by the government of Jordan and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Free the 'other' half

LAST WEEK'S world-wide commemoration of International Women's Day has elicited only a few kind words in the newspapers but, unfortunately, no concrete action to improve the status of women. Efforts by individuals are by no means insignificant, if only as reminders of what has to be done, but they are ineffective. The truth that many should recognise before they undertake the task of promoting and advocating women's rights in the Kingdom is that women, contrary to common rhetoric, do not really make up half of the society. Until today and despite great strides by a few the role of women in society continues to be marginal. Women have been excluded, or have excluded themselves, from all forms of the decision-making process in the society. They do not decide for their small families, nor for their communities nor for the country at large. Women are missing from every single level of decision-making in the country. Jordan is run by men with very little regard for how the decisions that are being taken affect the other "half of society" whom men claim to recognise and respect. The legal system, more than any other party, has contributed to the institutionalisation of the mentality of the "women as half human beings." "Women are being killed by their male relatives over the issue of "honour" and magistrates commute sentences of the offenders accepting women's "honour" as a reason for murder. This only deepens the concept that honour has only to do with the behaviour of women and not that of men who, being the decision-makers, squander the wealth of the nation or bring it defeat. We cannot afford to go into the twenty-first century while our laws still allow a man to divorce his wife on a whim while forcing her through a long and humiliating process before she can make a choice to part from a man. The law on passports, for example, requires adult women to obtain the permission of their fathers or husbands before they can receive what is their natural right as Jordanians, a document of citizenship. No one, therefore, can claim that women make up half of society when we still have all these backward and patriarchal laws of overblown male egos. Notwithstanding the fact that Jordan is one of the most advanced societies in the region, we cannot claim to be the guardians of human rights and champions of democracy in the region when half of the population continues to trail behind men who are too insecure to share. Before women are criticised for not having to earn their rights, the state should ensure those rights exist in the country's legal system. Only then will desperate women, who have been caught up in the triangle of "tradition", "honour" and the "gavel" be able to claim that they have the rights that they want to exercise.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE PROGRAMMED escalation against Iran and Sudan brings back to mind the fiery campaign which targeted Iraq and mobilised the Western public opinion against Baghdad in the days before the Gulf war. Al Ra'i Arabic daily said in an editorial. The newspaper said that despite the fact that Iran aided with the U.S.-led alliance during the confrontation between Iraq and the alliance led by "the great satan", and despite Iran's participation in blocking Iraq and its refusal to return Iraqi civil and military aircraft sent to it during the war, the Westerners did not appreciate Iran's role which enabled them to strike at Iraq and to continue their blockade imposed since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990. The Western countries, it said, are now isolating their campaign against Iran because it is a Muslim country and because its citizens are Muslims and because it is aiming to control its capabilities and wealth. One of the most repeated charges by the West against Iran is that it hosts terrorist groups and supports terrorism, it added. Al Ra'i said such a charge does not give any importance to Iran's role in weaving conspiracies against Iraq for Washington, London, Paris or the rest of the malicious Western states. Iran, the newspaper continued, is now required to realise that there is no way to confront this conspiracy and to abort it except by returning to Islam, which is the target of its enemies, and to return to the ranks of the Muslim nation, which is being described by the West as just, barbaric, backward and a terrorist nation. The only way for Iran to do this is to forfeit the circle of conspiracy against Iraq and commit the Iranians to the teachings of Islam which prohibits shedding the blood of a Muslim by another Muslim, prevents a Muslim nation from slaying other Muslims, and considers the whole nation as one body, the newspaper said. The only way for Iran to come out of this stalemate is to meet with Baghdad on the basis of Islam and its teachings rather than the United Nations charter. Otherwise Iran is destined to be the target of a new racist Operation Desert Storm," the paper said.

Al Dustour Arabic daily dealt in its editorial with the Jordanian-Palestinian meetings which were held in Amman in the past few days to coordinate the stands of both sides at the peace talks. The newspaper said the talks had shown the closeness of relations between the political leaderships of the two peoples. It said the continuation of coordination between the two sides in the past has been an element of strength for both sides in their "battle on the front of the peace process," especially that they are participating in the peace talks in a joint delegation. Al Dustour voiced its optimism over the close Jordanian-Palestinian relations and the continued coordination between the two sides, but it expressed relief that the basis of coordination should be expanded to include all the Arab parties to the peace talks to strengthen their position in the Arab-Israeli negotiations.

The View From Fourth Circle

Cute old men in new political guises

By Rami G. Khouri

NOW THAT we have 15 "political parties" and several on the way, and as the autumn 1993 parliamentary elections seem certain to take place as scheduled, the domestic political scene in Jordan will become both more lively and more important. More lively because the "political parties" should generate a marketplace of ideas from which voters can choose, and more important because of the example of pluralism that Jordan may set for the rest of the Arab World.

Many people in Jordan, justifiably pleased with themselves, have a tendency to exaggerate the nature and depth of our brand of democracy. We are not yet a pace-setting democracy. The facts are clear. We are in the very early stages of political liberalisation based on principles of democratic pluralism. Our intention and direction are impressive, but our performance is still in its very early days.

The last three years have been relatively easy, but superficial. The balance sheet of our progress is positive in its overall qualitative direction, but inconsistent in its substance: we have a part-time Parliament that is partly manned by part-time parliamentarians elected by part of our population; and our "political parties" at this stage are little more than mini-patriarchies, regional sheikhdoms, tribal allegiances, and personality cults reconfigured for the new look of democratic pluralism. A good start, but only a start so far.

Some of the new "political parties" may develop into genuine parties in time, sustained by collective commitments to ideologies and programmes, rather than allegiance to personalities or the promise of personal gain. Some parties will disappear or merge with others, and new ones will be born.

Already we have fragmentation and realignments among some of the parties whose founders were upset with the way some party members were behaving. In one party, many of the original founders resigned en masse and may start another party; unhappy with the way things turned out when they found themselves outmanoeuvred by others in their own party, they took their ball and went home.

As I said, these are early days.

Some people may criticise this as childish and immature behaviour. I do not think so. It is, I am absolutely consistent with the behaviour we would expect from a tribal, traditional, patriarchal, and ancient Semitic political culture that is subjected to the alien stresses of formalised democratic pluralism.

People changing from the old rules of governance and power to the new ones will not shed their old habits very easily. They will speak in the vocabulary of the new world and the modern age, but they will act according to their former ways. They will speak of the future, but act like the past. Whether in Chicago, Moscow or Amman, it is normal for the old men and the old rules to seek to preserve their hold on power by asserting themselves in a different guise. Most of our political parties in Jordan today fall

into this category — and we should not expect anything very different for the time being.

One of the most important things that should happen in the coming half a year, as the parties establish themselves and offer voters a range of ideological programmes and practical promises, is a redistribution of political allegiance among the electorate. The existing Parliament was elected when the Muslim Brotherhood and its independent Islamist colleagues were the only well organised political group that was allowed to function legally. The Islamists, therefore, have about 40 per cent of the seats in the present Lower House of Parliament; the big question in many people's minds is whether or not they will increase this share in the 1993 elections.

With the advent of pluralism and the establishment of other secular political parties, people wishing to express themselves politically now have options which they did not enjoy previously. Pan-Arab, leftist, pro-government, monarchist, tribal, and non-ideological technocratic parties should capture a significant chunk of the vote that Islamists won in the 1989 elections.

"The last three years have been relatively easy, but superficial. The balance sheet of our progress is positive in its overall qualitative direction, but inconsistent in its substance ..."

A key force that will come into play in domestic Jordanian politics this year is one that has been missing from the scene for about, oh, one thousand years: the principle of public accountability.

The parliamentarians now in power were voted in on a variety of slogans, programmes, and promises that appealed to the voters in the autumn of 1989, when Jordan faced a very different set of priorities from the one it does today. Now the MPs have to go back to their constituents and ask to be reelected. If things work as they should, a whole series of forces in society should assess whether or not the MPs carried out the promises of autumn 1989. Ideally, these forces should include the voters, candidates challenging incumbents, the new political parties, the press, special interest groups (women, students, environmentalists, religious folk, etc.), professionals and intellectuals, business associations, men and women of culture and the arts, and virtually everyone else in society with the exception of the armed forces and the structures of the state (which are deemed outside the political arena).

The voters are smart, and for the first time in a long time they are going to have the opportunity to exercise their political intelligence. They know what they want and need, and they also know a cheap politician when they run into one.

The novelty of political parties will not hide the deficiencies of those MPs who shall be judged by the voters to have been charlatans and failures, and MPs who accurately reflected their constituents' sentiments and needs will be sent back to Parliament once again with a renewed mandate.

The Islamists will be the most hard-pressed to maintain their support among the public, because they will no longer enjoy the near monopoly on political organisation that they exploited so well in 1989.

The Islamist vote may go up or down slightly, depending on a range of factors that will influence voters' opinions. But this is the key issue this year, despite the strange insistence of Western media and officials to focus on it. The more important long-term trend to look for this year is the extent to which the new parties can develop into credible vehicles of political organisation.

If we are to make a viable transformation from a society of men into a society of men and women and laws, the political parties will be one of the first areas to look for signs of change and progress. Unfortunately, the parties, as they are now defined, are such freaks in our society that they may not prove the most appropriate vehicles for political transformation and rebirth. I call them freaks because they are essentially Western imports that have no ideological or procedural roots in our society, and they are further encumbered by the strict constraints set by the government. Some of them already suffer from their rather funny birth at the hands of the Ministry of Interior: a few that were initially banned were subsequently approved when they made some superficial and probably meaningless changes in their constitutions, causing serious doubts about the nature and meaning of this transparent political game.

These are serious flaws in our democratisation process, but they should not be exaggerated. The scope, intent and direction of our political transformation remain valid, even relevant and important, in a regional context.

Unlike Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, Lebanon, and other grievous Arab lands, our democratisation and liberalisation endure, even though gradually, and they are unencumbered by heavy-handed militarism and violence, and are only slightly distorted by some of our tired old mid-century men.

We have completed the easy part. Now we embark on the more difficult triple challenge of attempting to institutionalise: a -pluralism, b -public participation, and c -accountability, within a distinctly Jordanian/Arab/Islamic/Semitic context and in a manner that is credible to our people.

No Arab society has ever done this during this century — which makes our flaws seem manageable, our mini-patriarchies rather cute, our mid-century hangover endurable, and our ambitions eminently sensible.

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U.S. foreign policy

Do Americans know what it is?

By Walter R. Mears
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — For President Bill Clinton, blurred lines in foreign policy could create a mirror image of the troubles George Bush faced over a vague domestic programme.

On problems at home, the Clinton message is drawn sharply and repeated regularly. Not so on matters abroad, although overseas issues are high on his agenda, and a summit is on his schedule.

Mr. Bush concentrated on foreign policy, said he preferred it, and paid the penalty when he lost reelection in a campaign dominated by domestic economic concerns.

Mr. Clinton said he would keep a laser-like focus on the economy, but would not ignore international problems which, intended, could worsen and demand full time attention.

He's done both, but the kind of attention and explanation that can build policy support has been dedicated to his economic programme so his call for new high income and energy taxes is familiar at home: his guarded policy on the possible use of U.S. troops in an international force in Bosnia is not so widely understood.

After conferring with French President Francois Mitterrand Tuesday, Mr. Clinton said he had "restated the position of the administration, which is now well known in the public," on the possibility of sending U.S. troops to join an international force if

there is a diplomatic settlement in what was Yugoslavia.

Mr. Clinton said that position is that the United States will not use troops in the civil conflict in Bosnia, but would be interested in joining a United Nations force to help guarantee a peace agreement if there is one.

To gain support for a military mission as controversial as that surely would be, the administration will need to convince Americans that it is in the national interest, and that there's a way out as well as compelling reason to go in.

Candidate Clinton had said he would use air power against Serbian forces besieging Bosnian Muslims; as president his policy has been more cautious than that, but more assertive than that of the Bush administration.

Mr. Clinton now is seeking to tighten the economic embargo against Serbia to inflict more of a price for Serb aggression.

The United States is airdropping food and medical supplies into eastern Bosnia, a humanitarian effort that continues after initial mixed messages from the administration itself.

Secretary of Defense Les Aspin had said the initial drops achieved a "symbolic goal" by showing the Serbs they should stop blocking U.N. relief convoys, and the operation was being suspended. A day later, Mr. Clinton said the air drops would continue as planned. Mr. Aspin said he'd been misunderstood.

Mr. Clinton is working to gain support for his efforts to increase

U.S. and allied aid to Russia, saying it is essential to prevent economic and democratic reforms there from founders.

He said the United States should be willing to spend a tiny fraction of what it cost for cold war defence in an effort to preserve democracy in a former Communist foe.

The administration will seek about \$700 million in technical assistance for Russia and other former Soviet republics, and increase from \$417 million that was in the budget. President Clinton also plans to recommit Russian debt relief and steps to make it easier for that government to borrow from international lending institutions.

Detailed proposals are due before his scheduled summit meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Vancouver, April 3-4. Mr. Yeltsin is struggling to hold his powers and continue his market reforms; Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Thursday the administration will continue to support him, and hopes his position will be strengthened.

But foreign aid always is a hard sell, doubly so as the administration seeks tax increases and cuts in domestic spending. At a White House briefing on foreign policy, a question made the connection:

Would new taxes go into increased aid?

"No new taxes are being requested for assistance to Russia," the answer came. Even the question pointed up the problem.

M. KAHL



Salvaging the peace process.

A responsibility for all

By Dr. As'ad Abdulla Rahaman

LAST MONDAY morning a disgruntled and totally disappointed Palestinian youth stabbed to death two Israelis and wounded eight others in a busy street of Tel Aviv. A state of pandemonium soon wrapped the crowded Jewish city and mobs took to the streets calling for vengeance and death to Arabs. The Gazan youth barely escaped death by the angry hooligans, as usually was to detect in the occupied territories and the Arab World at large.

How and when will this cycle of violence and counter violence end?

Seventh, both Mr. Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat are in a tight position. There are forces to their right that pose serious limitations to their political manoeuvrability. Although Mr. Rabin is more comfortably positioned to give Israel's present high level of human rights abuses, it will probably not be the last. Third, the vicious circle of violence and counter violence will probably tend to divide the Palestinian/Arab and Israeli/Zionist views even further.

Fourth, the continuation of the status quo will probably exacerbate the situation even further. Fifth, such developments take place amidst the dilemma of the expellees which was close to being solved. Its solution would have no doubt helped smooth out yet another problem created by the intransigent position taken by the Israeli delegation during the seventh and eighth rounds of peace talks. Sixth, the expulsion of the 400 plus Palestinians and the international pressure it generated persuaded Israel that it has to abide by the limits of its power.

For the first time in its history, Israel is forced to implement a U.N. resolution (799), albeit gradually and by installments.

The reaction of the Rabin government to the Tel Aviv operation was characterised by clear

North Korean nuclear impasse

A crisis in the making

By Kelly Smith Tunney
The Associated Press

SEOUL — North Korea's surprise decision to withdraw from the nuclear control treaty, rejecting nuclear inspections, may spin into a new crisis in the Korean peninsula.

It heightens suspicions from the international community that North Korea has a nuclear weapons programme and may already have material for a nuclear warhead, despite Pyongyang's denials.

The withdrawal is a major setback in the painstaking process of gaining compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as a defeat for moderates on both sides of the border who supported historic peace pacts.

"This is a serious challenge.

"It will have a grave impact on

the credibility of all existing accords between South and North Korea," warned South Korean information minister Oh In Hwan.

Long-time observers see three possible explanations for North Korea's decision: It has a nuclear weapons programme and doesn't want to show it, it is using the

threat of nuclear weapons to gain leverage in future negotiations, or it is trying to cover up internal problems.

"Whatever the reason, this is a major setback for Korean relations," said William J. Taylor, Jr., of the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Clinton sees real chance for talks

(Continued from page 1)

Lebanon but the principle of no more expulsions must be clearly established.

Other points under discussion are a promise to speed up the return of the exiles, agreement to allow the return of other Palestinians expelled since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, and a set of measures to ease restrictions on Palestinians living under occupation.

The six-point plan also seeks from the U.S. two statements of policy crucial to the Palestinians.

One is an assurance that U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, which demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories in return for peace, cover East Jerusalem.

The other is a declaration that expulsions are illegal.

In Mar Al Zohour, Lebanon, Palestinian exiles accused Mr. Clinton of supporting Israel's "terrorist policies" but said he had no choice but to push Israel to take them all back immediately.

Abdul Aziz Rantisi, leader of the 396 exiles, said Mr. Clinton

was to try to help Mr. Rabin when they meet in Washington Monday.

"Clinton will strive to save Rabin and pull him out of his predicament but he has no other way but to solve the (expellee) crisis," Dr. Rantisi said at their makeshift camp in South Lebanon.

"They will try to think up a way out of the dilemma which they fell into. We demand that America and Clinton implement U.N. Resolution 799... so they do not lose their credibility."

"Clinton totally backs up the terrorist policy followed by the Zionist government occupying Palestine," said Dr. Rantisi, adding a U.S.-Israeli plan last month to take back immediately about 100 of the exiles was a bid to evade Resolution 799.

"I stress to Clinton he has to understand that the U.S.-Israeli deal has been buried," added Dr. Rantisi. The exiles insist they will only go home together.

An official Syrian newspaper said Sunday Mr. Christopher last month pledged to resolve the crisis before the resumption of peace talks.

Somali peace conference launched

(Continued from page 1)
mechanism by which peace, law and order, and public services can be provided."

"We don't think there is need for a transitional government," he said in an interview Sunday.

Observers say Gen. Aideed, whose power base lies in the south, would see his power diluted if he accepted a national administration.

The United Nations and the countries that pledged \$142 million over the weekend to help feed and rebuild Somalia this year have told the factions that aid and relief work might be cut if the talks fail.

Gen. Aideed accused the U.S.-led intervention force Monday of going beyond its mandate and humiliating the Somali people.

Gen. Aideed accused troops of the United Nations Task Force (UNITAF) of breaking into homes and ejecting the occupants on the excuse of looking for weapons.

In a hard-hitting speech at the closed-door meeting, Gen. Aideed blamed the lack of a central government for what he called his country's humiliation.

Moroccan police chief sentenced to death

(Continued from page 1)

failure to denounce a crime, were sentenced to 20- and 10-year prison terms, respectively.

Thirteen others also received sentences in the scandal-laden "Tabetgate" by the country's newspapers.

The case came to light after two young girls who were victims of Mr. Tabet's sexual exploits filed suit.

The court awarded the 10 women who eventually testified at the closed-door trial damages ranging from \$30,000 to 150,000 dirhams (about \$3,270 to \$16,360).

In their testimony, the women said they were taken to Mr. Tabet's apartment "by force, ruse or threat" and subjected to "the most atrocious sexual cruelty."

Mr. Tabet claimed the women were all "consenting."

The court differed after viewing some of the cassettes. One lawyer for the plaintiffs reportedly passed out while looking at one of the tapes and had to be taken to the hospital.

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Motorist kills two settlers in W. Bank

(Continued from page 1)

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Palestinians may ask for boycott of talks

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinians from the occupied territories.

In addition, Mr. Najib said in a statement faxed to the Jordan Times, Israel should also commit itself to implementing U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, include Jerusalem in a Palestinian interim self-government arrangement proposal and to respect the Geneva conventions related to treatment of the occupied by the occupier.

Hamas approach to Gaza

The Islamic group Hamas said Monday it had asked the PLO, its main rival in the Israeli-occupied territories, to discuss the future of the Gaza Strip if Israel withdrew.

"We have called on the PLO in Tunis to convene an urgent meeting of all Palestinian factions to discuss a possible sudden unilateral withdrawal by the Jewish state," said Ibrahim, spokesman for the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).

He said he believed a sudden withdrawal by the Israelis could be aimed at fostering internal strife to prove that the Palestinians could not govern themselves.

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Sports

Patrick McEnroe upsets Ivanisevic

KYALAMI, South Africa (R) — Patrick McEnroe, who frequently walks in the shadow of his superstar brother John, pulled off Sunday's major upset at the \$3 million Lipton Championships with a 6-3, 6-3 second-round win over sixth seed Goran Ivanisevic.

Elsewhere, second-seeded Steffi Graf of Germany and fourth-seeded Jennifer Capriati of the United States waltzed through second-round matches on a blustery, chilly day, while tennis idol Jimmy Connors stumbled in the first round.

The second-ranked Graf easily dissected the 88th-ranked Chanda Rubin of the United States 6-2, 6-1 in 45 minutes, sixth-ranked Capriati needed 55 minutes to defeat 63rd-ranked Ines Gorrochategui of Argentina 6-1, 6-0.

Conditions were not ideal for Connors. The swirling wind didn't favour the 40-year-old American's style of play, giving little-known Swede David Engel a 6-3, 6-3 win and something to tell his future children and grandchildren about.

"I think he's the greatest player of all time," enthused the 167th-ranked Engel. "I think it was an honour."

Second-seeded Pete Sampras posted a 6-3, 6-4 second-round win over fellow American Todd Martin.

Ivanisevic went out against McEnroe knowing he is struggling these days.

The sixth-ranked Croatian, a player with immense talent but questionable mental fortitude at times, is not in peak physical form — a result of a stress fracture in his right foot that forced him to withdraw from January's Australian Open. He didn't play again until Rotterdam three weeks ago.

"I'm really struggling very badly," admitted Ivanisevic, a 1991 Wimbledon finalist. "I have to beat somebody. It doesn't matter who, just anybody."

McEnroe ranked 180th, was not interested in being Ivanisevic's sacrificial lamb. Ranked 31st in October 1991, McEnroe, a noted doubles competitor, is looking to resurrect his singles career.

"I'm certainly happy to get a win like that," said McEnroe. "I know Goran's not at his best, but I certainly believe I had something to do with that."



Even with seasoned stars like James Worthy (right) playing, the Lakers lost 117-107 to the Atlanta Hawks

Pistons beat Bulls, Charlotte win in Boston

DETROIT (R) — Michael Jordan is usually the star of any show he appears in but Sunday was definitely Joe Dumars' day in Detroit.

Dumars scored 27 points, including the 10,000th of his career, and his Pistons held Jordan scoreless for the last nine minutes of the game as Detroit beat the Chicago Bulls 106-99 to snap a five-game losing streak.

Alvin Robertson made a jump shot and free throw in the final 2-44 for Detroit while Jordan and Scottie Pippen missed jumpers in the final 40 seconds that could have given the Bulls the lead.

In Boston, Alonzo Mourning had 25 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Charlotte Hornets to their first-ever win at the Boston Garden, a 96-93 triumph over the Celtics.

Robert Parish had 21 points and 13 rebounds and Kevin Gamble scored 20 for the Celtics, who have lost two in a row after winning seven of their previous

eight.

Muggsy Bogues had 14 points, 10 assists and six of Charlotte's 14 steals.

In New York, John Stark had 31 points and 10 assists and Patrick Ewing netted 29 as the Knicks extended their winning streak to six games with a 121-90 victory over the Indiana Pacers.

In Orlando, Shawn Kemp had 27 points and 12 rebounds as the Seattle Supersonics salvaged the finale of their five-game road trip with a 105-97 victory over the Magic.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 29 points for the Magic, who lost for the fifth time in their last seven games. Nick Anderson added 26 for Orlando.

At Minnesota, Ron Harper scored 25 points and Stanley Roberts added 20 as the Los Angeles Clippers continued their dominance over the Timberwolves with a 124-107 victory in the second game of their home-and-home series.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANIAH HIRSCH
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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦AJ63 ♠10954 ♣AJ ♦654

The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
Pass Pass 10 Pass
Pass Pass Dbl

What action do you take?
A.—You have to tell partner that, even if he has opened light in third seat, the hand belongs to you. The only way to convey that information is for you to redouble. You have safety because partner would not have passed your response without at least three-card heart support.

Q.2—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♦73 ♠KQJ10652 ♣AS ♦J6

The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
North East South West
10 4 7
Pass Pass 10 Pass

What do you bid now?
A.—You have a very fine heart suit and a hand rich in playing tricks, but the fact you don't hold a singleton anywhere about tempts your optimism. A rebid of two hearts is quite ample for the moment.

Q.3—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♦KJ6 ♠QJ10 ♣AQ643 ♦84

The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
10 Pass ?

What do you bid now?
A.—If you start with one club, you have no good rebid should partner bid one heart. In accordance with the Principle of Preparation, we would open one diamond, intending to rebid two clubs over a response of one heart.

The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
10 Pass 10 Pass

What do you bid now?
A.—If you start with one club, you have no good rebid should partner bid one heart. In accordance with the Principle of Preparation, we would open one diamond, intending to rebid two clubs over a response of one heart.

The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
10 Pass ?

What do you bid now?
A.—Since it's most unlikely that

you have an eight-card major suit fit, there's no point to responding one diamond now—your most probable game is three no trump.

Prost wins S. African GP, faces decisive week

KYALAMI, South Africa (R) — Frenchman Alain Prost made a victorious return to Formula One Sunday in an incident-filled South African Grand Prix on his first outing with his new Williams team.

In a race which ended in chaos with thunder, lightning and heavy rain, Prost cruised home one minute and 19 seconds ahead of his nearest rival, Brazilian Ayrton Senna in a McLaren.

Prost, a convincing victor for Williams, returns to France this week for a hearing which could decide his and the Formula One World Championship's future.

The 38-year-old Frenchman will face the International Motor Sports Federation's (FISA) World Council in Paris on Thursday to counter charges that he brought the sport into disrepute with alleged criticism of the FISA leadership in a French magazine this year.

If Prost, who plans to play a tape of the original interview he gave to the Auto Plus magazine, is found guilty and suspended, he may, as threatened Saturday evening, quit the sport.

That would leave his superb South African exhibition behind as his racing epitaph.

If that happened, it would almost certainly make this year's title race invitingly open for Senna, who finished second to Prost in Sunday's stirring race in his McLaren, assuming the Brazilian decides to race on.

But the question which gripped the imagination in the Kyalami paddock was which team will Senna drive with for the rest of



Frenchman Alain Prost at Sunday's South African Formula One Grand Prix (AFP photo)

Williams and McLaren if the Grand Prix series is to survive the challenge it faces from Indycar Racing following Briton Nigel Mansell's move to the American series.

Mansell, the 1992 F1 world champion, makes his first racing appearance for the Newman-Haas Indycar team next Sunday in Australia.

Prost and Senna dominated the South African Grand Prix weekend from start to finish and left many of their emerging rivals in the shade.

Both Benetton were forced to retire — German Michael Schumacher after an unwise attempt to find a way past Senna on the inside — and both the newcomers at Williams and McLaren failed to complete the distance in their first Grand Prix with the teams.

British Damon Hill's debut for Williams ended after only 16 laps when he was in a collision with Italian Alessandro Zanardi's Lotus while American Michael Andretti lasted only four laps before a brush with Briton Derek Warwick's footwork tore off his right front wheel.

Of the rest, Ferrari showed some improvement over the weekend with their new active F39A car, but Ligier and new Swiss Sauber team were the most impressive.

Ligier, using ex-Williams automatic transmission and Renault engines, scored their best result for many years with Briton Mark Blundell finishing third. Two places ahead of him JJ Lehto who marked his first race with Sauber by finishing fifth.

and bravery, was unable to compete with Prost and the McLaren team. Although he has made it clear he hopes to challenge for the championship in the new McLaren MP4/6, he might find the temptation of a possible drive as Prost's replacement at Williams irresistible.

All these possibilities fuelled a lively rumour mill even before Sunday's race, which ended in a thunderstorm with only seven cars classified as finishers.

Prost, back after a year's sabbatical, drove with all his old authority to improve his record career total of Grand Prix wins to 45.

Senna, for all his commitment

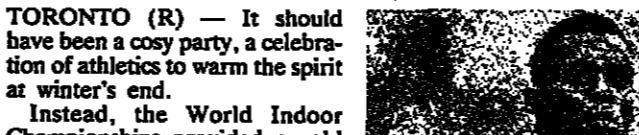
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Senna, for all his commitment

Chill reminder of athletics ills at Skydome



for she twice lowered the indoor standard for the 60-metre hurdles in Seville.

But as Narozhnenko was leaving, Butch Reynolds was arriving back on the international scene after a two and a half year exile over a disputed doping suspension.

Reynolds, who won a \$27.3 million lawsuit against the International Amateur Athletic Federation in a U.S. court last December, triumphed this time on the track as he seized the gold in the 400 metres.

"This was vindication, it's not any normal gold medal for me," the 28-year-old American world record holder said.

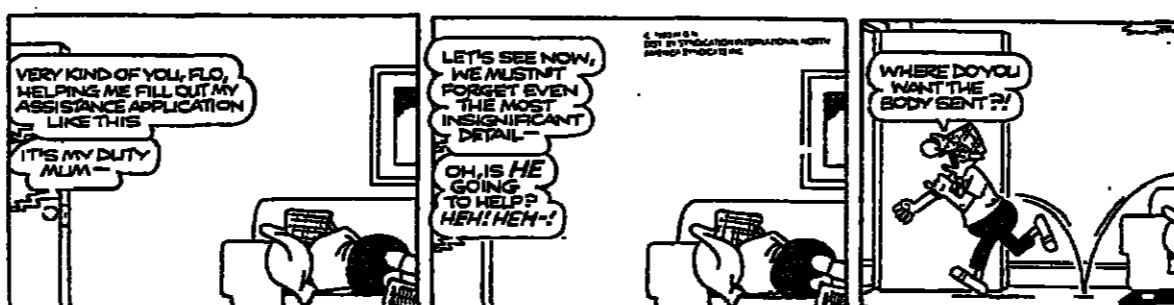
Claiming gold after surviving suspensions was all the rage in Toronto as four other titles were also won by once punished athletes including both hurdle champions, Canadian Mark McKoy and Julie Baumann now of Switzerland.

The level of competition at the championships was uneven, but two world records were set on the final day.

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



JORDAN TIMES, TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 1993

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY MARCH 16, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

have recently met who can be the means by which you gain help and a better awareness of your character, growth.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You have a good chance this day to find the best ways and means for adding to your assets by consulting with those who are experienced in such.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Matters come to light for you today that require a considerable amount of thought and they are apt to be of a worldly and a public nature.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a day to get all of those practical concerns that are difficult to get in their niche during the busy days that are ahead.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Whatever hobbies that appeal to you the most can be perfected now so that it can be used in the future to bring you a considerable amount of pleasure.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) On this day what you have put off in getting your dwelling place in the pink of condition and that applies to painting articles as well.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Communications to and from others should be confined to the gist of whatever earthly interests exist and arrive at sensible, common sense solutions.

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasberg



"It's 11:59 PM and you haven't complimented me yet today.

Time's running out!"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRABBLE WORD GAME

by Heidi Arnold

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LEEXI

© 1992 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

PEALL

© 1992 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

DRUTSY

© 1992 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

CRADOC

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Now arrange the circled letters to guess the surprise word, as suggested by the above cartoon.

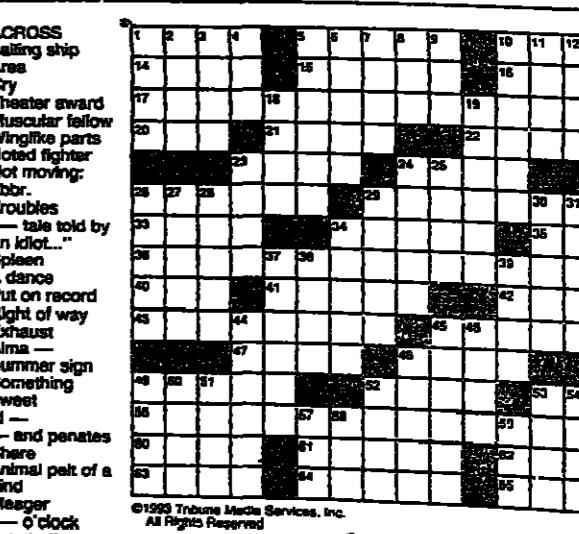
Print answer here:

Yesterday's Jumble: ELATE OWING RAGLAN CORNER

Answer: The dealer in "hot ice" ended up in this—the COOLER

THE Daily Crossword

by James Barrick



Economy

Greece to intensify tax evasion fight

ATHENS (R) — Greece's conservative government will intensify its fight against rampant tax evasion, speed its privatisation programme and complete the liquidation of problem state companies in 1993, the economy ministry has said.

In its regular six-month report, it said Greece would stick to a strict incomes policy and an "intensely anti-inflationary" monetary and exchange rate policy as well as keeping up efforts to achieve fiscal adjustments.

The report, covering the final six months of 1992, predicted Greece's real gross domestic product (GDP) would grow by around two per cent in 1993, compared to 1.5 per cent in 1992. It said European Community

(EC) funds would ensure Greece's real public investment would increase significantly in 1993, by up to 10.9 per cent.

Greece's high interest rates, around 24.75 per cent for the banks' best customers, plus an extra eight per cent government tax, would "soften" after the first six months in 1993, it said.

It said there would be no real rise in public sector pay, noting salaries and pensions together would increase by only 9.1 per cent in 1993.

The ministry has targeted consumer price inflation, now around 14.5 per cent annually, to fall below 10 per cent by the end of 1993 — the first single digit inflation figure in 20 years.

Financial Markets in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets		
Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close
Sterling Pound	1.4324	1.4230
Deutsche Mark	1.0050	1.0072
Swiss Franc	1.5200	1.5238
French Franc	5.6580	5.6646 **
Japanese Yen	116.07	116.18
European Currency Unit	1.1648	1.1636 **

Eurocurrency Interest Rates Date: 15/3/1993				
Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	3.18	3.18	3.25	3.56
Sterling Pound	5.88	5.68	5.50	5.50
Deutsche Mark	8.19	7.81	7.37	6.69
Swiss Franc	5.00	4.87	4.50	4.25
French Franc	11.37	11.12	9.75	8.62
Japanese Yen	3.57	3.12	3.12	3.09
European Currency Unit	9.31	9.00	8.50	8.00

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding \$1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals Date: 15/3/1993					
Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	326.10	6.35	Silver	3.63	.080

*24 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin Date: 15/3/1993

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6020	0.6040
Sterling Pound	0.9908	0.9958
Deutsche Mark	0.4127	0.4168
Swiss Franc	0.4556	0.4559
French Franc	0.1220	0.1226
Japanese Yen	0.5849	0.5878
Dutch Guilder	0.3689	0.3707
Swedish Krona	0.0888	0.0892
Italian Lira	0.0430	0.0432
Belgian Franc	0.02020	0.02030

Per 100

Other Currencies	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8110	1.8260
Lebanese Lira	0.03645	0.04150
Saudi Riyal	0.1540	0.1855
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.2200	2.2450
Qatari Riyal	0.1873	0.1886
Egyptian Pound	0.1940	0.2150
Omani Riyal	1.7700	1.7870
UAE Dirham	0.1873	0.1886
Greek Drachma	0.30625	0.32625
Cypriot Pound	1.3775	1.4500

Per 100

Index	13/3/1993 Close	14/3/1993 Close
All-Share	191.65	191.70
Banking Sector	133.32	133.59
Insurance Sector	213.52	213.01
Industry Sector	272.44	272.17
Services Sector	251.20	251.89

December 31, 1992 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One U.S. dollar	1.2458/63	Canadian dollar
	1.6675/85	Deutschmarks
1.8745/55		Dutch guilders
1.5278/88		Swiss francs
34.32/36		Belgian francs
5.6600/700		French francs
1607/1609		Italian lire
118.02/07		Japanese yen
7.8730/820		Swedish kronas
7.0900/1000		Norwegian kronas
6.4100/200		Danish kronas
One sterling	\$1.4305/15	
One ounce of gold	\$327.90/328.40	

7 UAE ministries to spend \$280m

ABU DHABI (R) — Seven ministries in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will spend 1.03 billion dirhams (\$280.7 million) in 1993, an official study published Sunday said.

The study, carried by the Emirates news agency WAM, said the seven ministries' share of the total "investment programme" rose by five per cent in 1993 to 86 per cent.

The ministry of public works and housing, the biggest spender of the seven, will 353 million dirhams (\$96.2 million) on projects in 1993, a rise of 12.76 million dirhams (\$34.8 million) from the previous year.

The ministry of defence is not among the seven departments mentioned in the study and experts have said the UAE plans to spend more than a billion dollars a year on arms imports till the end of the century.

The ministry of water and electricity's projects will cost 256 million dirhams (\$69.8 million) while the ministry of education will spend 201 million dirhams (\$54.8 million) in the 1993 fiscal year which started Jan. 1.

UAE President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan Wednesday approved the 1993 budget, which forecasts a deficit of 1.72 billion dirhams (\$467 million). It put expenditure at 17.63 billion dirhams (\$4.8 billion) and a revenue target of an annual six per cent in the current 1991-95 five-year plan set during last year's

"Our plan to increase the gross national product by eight per cent in 1993 leaves some room for unforeseen circumstances — that is, the figure may be exceeded."

Moreover, this is an overall growth rate for the country as a whole. Where conditions permit, a higher rate can and should be achieved," he said, in a reference to economically-booming coastal provinces.

If growth stayed on track, Mr. Li said, the goal of quadrupling the 1989 value of GNP by the year 2000 could be achieved within five years.

Despite pressure from economic liberals directed by paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, Mr. Li initially stuck to his growth target of an annual six per cent in the current 1991-95 five-year plan set during last year's

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Angry Yeltsin accuses Congress of seeking Communist comeback

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, stung by humiliations from Russia's supreme legislature, accused Congress of seeking to restore Communist rule.

Angered by setbacks to his reform programme last week, he charged that the Congress of People's Deputies was breaking the constitution.

A statement signed by his press spokesman gave no indication of what action was planned by the 62-year-old president. Russia's first democratically-elected leader, beyond saying he would make it known "in the next few days."

But it said: "Numerous appeals are coming to the president from enterprises, social organisations and private citizens in the regions of Russia asking him to defend democracy and stop the Communist restoration."

Mr. Yeltsin's aides have hinted that he might try to impose presidential rule — a risky path that would require military backing — if Congress continued to undermine his power.

The Congress Saturday ended a four-day session during which it rejected virtually all Mr. Yeltsin's proposals and cancelled a planned referendum on whether parliament or president should be supreme in Russia.

Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov portrayed Congress as a bulwark against dictatorship and said the session had been a triumph for stability and democracy in Russia.

Mr. Yeltsin's statement, signed by spokesman Vyacheslav Kostikov after meeting the president, said Congress had spurned a deal to end Russia's political crisis in favour of confrontation.

The president spent Sunday pondering his next move at a country retreat outside Moscow.

"Having denied the people the right to express its will by a referendum, Congress has embarked on the path of violating the constitution," it said.

Mr. Yeltsin escaped with his powers more or less intact, but with his defences weakened.

He has said he will challenge the ban on a referendum in the constitutional court. In any case he plans to go ahead with a nationwide opinion poll on who should rule the country, though this vote would not be legally binding.

But constitutional court Chairman Valery Zorkin left Monday for a two-week trip to the United States.

Parliament is due to meet this week. It will at some stage debate moves to place media organisations under its own control and consider whether to hold early presidential and parliamentary elections.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Bill Clinton firmly supports Mr. Yeltsin's reform efforts and does not expect challenges to the Russian leader's authority to delay next month's summit, Mr. Clinton's chief spokesman said Sunday.

Mr. Clinton, who has called for more aggressive Western backing for Mr. Yeltsin, plans to hold two days of talks with him on April 3 and 4 in Vancouver, Canada — their first meeting as presidents.

Congress — likewise elected democratically, though at a time when the Communist Party was still the dominant political force — voted itself sweeping powers to remove Mr. Yeltsin if he deviated from the constitution.

Asked if there would be a delay in the summit, Mr. Stephanopoulos replied: "I don't think so.

He returned Monday to the capital, where he is due to receive French President François Mitterrand Tuesday.

Mr. Clinton "remains firm in his commitment to help the reform process, to help the process of democratic and economic reforms in Russia," the presidential spokesman said on the CBS programme "Face The Nation."

He stressed that Mr. Clinton "supports President Yeltsin, the only Russian leader in all of Russia's history who was elected in democratic and free elections."

"He continues to support President Yeltsin and the process of reform," Mr. Stephanopoulos said.

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"No chance I'm going to answer that question," he said.

Opposition demands Rao quit over bombings

NEW DELHI (R) — India's parliamentary opposition party accused Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao Monday of a cover-up over a spate of bomb blasts in Bombay which killed 250 people and demanded his resignation.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said Mr. Rao was too busy fighting a factional war in his Congress Party to read intelligence reports about the attack days before 13 huge explosions rocked Bombay Friday.

It gave no details of the reports to which it referred.

Meanwhile experts defused two motorbike bombs, each packed with 20 kilogrammes of

plastic explosives, in Bombay's crowded gold and diamond bazaar Monday.

"These would have blown up the entire gold and diamond markets," Nandkumar Chowgule, head of the police bomb squad, told reporters.

Police cordoned off the central Bhayander Bridge on the outskirts of Bombay, India's financial centre and main port, were suspended Monday morning after a separate bomb scare. Police said they were checking if there was a bomb on the bridge.

Pakistan said Monday suspicions in India that it might have been behind bomb blasts in Bombay last Friday were "wild and unfounded."

A foreign ministry spokesman

regretted what he called "the reprehensible tendency on the part of Indian politicians to blame Pakistan for every unpleasant event in India."

"Such wild, unfounded and mischievous statements accusing Pakistan of involvement in terrorist activities do not help in solving the problems and adversely affect efforts for establishing tension-free and good neighbourly relations between Pakistan and India," he said.

Indian intelligence agents tracking the bombers said Sunday the trail pointed towards groups in Pakistan.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

1 killed in blast at German plant

FRANKFURT (R) — An explosion rocked a factory of the German chemical group Hoechst AG Monday morning killing one person and injuring at least one other, fire brigade sources said. A Hoechst spokeswoman could not give further details but said the blast took place at a plant that produces a plastic substance called Mowiol. Fire brigade sources said the plant was still on fire at 0745 GMT. Hoechst has reported a series of accidents since Feb. 22, when two tonnes of poisonous chemicals escaped from a plant in western Frankfurt. The surrounding neighbourhood had to be cleaned of the substance in an operation lasting two weeks.

12 killed by bomb in Abkhazia

MOSCOW (R) — Twelve people were killed when a bomb dropped on the capital of Georgia's breakaway Abkhazia region exploded as it was being defused, Russian Television said. It listed the victims as eight Georgian soldiers, three Georgian journalists and an Abkhaz citizen. The Abkhazian capital Sukhumi is in Georgian hands, though most of the Black Sea region on Russia's southern border is controlled by Abkhazian separatists. The report said an SU-25 attack aircraft bombed districts of Sukhumi for 40 minutes Saturday, damaging houses and inflicting casualties. It dropped nine bombs, two of which exploded. The television did not say who controlled the plane. It said a Georgian television crew accompanied sappers from the Georgian National Guard who went to defuse the unexploded bombs. "As the very first bomb was being defused eight sappers, three journalists and one citizen of Abkhazia were killed. So far, six bombs have still not been defused and could explode at any moment," the television said.

Aspin, Powell open hearing on bases

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defence Secretary Les Aspin says he considered the impact on local economies in recommending base closings that will change the face of the armed forces and affect dozens of communities nationwide. Mr. Aspin and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Colin Powell were testifying Monday before the Defence Base Closure and Realignment Commission, an independent panel with the power to modify the proposed closure list. Mr. Aspin, acting on the suggestions of each service, Friday proposed closing 31 major military installations and realigning or scaling back 135 others. This third round of base closings is part of the process of trimming post cold war military strength to 1.4 million personnel by 1997, down from the Reagan era force of 2.1 million. Navy installations dominated this round of closures, and coastal states such as California, Florida and South Carolina were among the hardest hit.

Freighter sinks off Canada coast

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia (AP) — A freighter sank off Nova Scotia early Monday in the violent winter storm that has wreaked havoc off the eastern seaboard, officials said. The fate of its 33 crew members was not known. The 160 metre (530 feet) Gold Bond Conveyor, which was carrying gypsum ore from Halifax to Tampa, Fla., sank just after midnight, when winds were reported gusting to 80 mph (130 kph) and seas were over 18 metres (60 feet). The ship went down about 105 kilometres southeast of Cape Sable Island. A British vessel and a Canadian aircraft were at the scene at the time of the sinking but it could not be determined what role Hong Kong officials should play in the decision-

U.N. human rights probe blames Salvadorean army

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A U.N. human rights report has accused the Salvadorean Armed Forces and their allies of knowing of, and in some cases ordering, the torture, kidnapping and massacre of thousands of civilians.

Among the cases analysed during the six-month inquiry by a U.N. commission were the killings of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter in 1989.

El Salvador's defence and deputy defence ministers among others were accused of ordering the murders because of Jesuit opposition to the government.

The report, made available to

journalists Monday, named military officials implicated in the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, the massacre of hundreds of civilians in the village of El Mozote in 1981 and the 1980 killing of four American nuns.

It said the country's Supreme Court president impeded several judicial investigations.

The long-awaited report by the "commission on the truth" was part of the El Salvador peace accords signed by the government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) a year ago that ended the Central American country's civil war.

The conflict lasted 12 years and

cost 75,000 lives.

China accuses U.K. of creating disorder in Hong Kong

PEKING (Agencies) — Premier Li Peng Monday angrily accused Britain of trying to destabilise Hong Kong by unilaterally proposing political reforms before the colony is returned to China in 1997.

The plan "is designed to create disorder and to impede the smooth transfer of power, so it is not a question of democracy," Mr. Li said in his annual work report at the opening session of China's legislature.

His monotone reading of the two hour work report quickly switched to an angry, haranguing tone when he came to the section denouncing Britain. His sharp criticism of the political reform package — he called it "perfidious" — was met with strong applause four times from the nearly 3,000 delegates.

"We're simply disappointed to see this kind of attack turn up in Li Peng's work report," British embassy spokeswoman Janet Rogan said after the speech.

China intensified its verbal attack on the plan proposed in October by the British colonial governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten after he took a first step Patten towards submitting it to the local legislature.

Mr. Patten's move came after efforts to hold formal talks on political reform stumbled over what role Hong Kong officials should play in the decision-

making process.

Peking already has threatened to set up a "shadow government" for Hong Kong and to void all business contracts signed by Hong Kong without China's approval. Such moves would undermine the authority of the colonial government before the turnover.

Mr. Li said China sought cooperation instead of confrontation with Britain.

"But the Chinese government will never barter away principles," he said. "The only solution for the British government is to change its course..."

Ms. Rogan said the British were ready to have talks without preconditions. She said she didn't know whether Mr. Li's remarks would make talks more difficult.

Although Peking has promised Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy after the turnover, the Communist Chinese reject Mr. Patten's political reform package, fearing that democracy in the colony would give ideas to mainland Chinese.

In a scarcely-veiled threat to the United States and France, Premier Li said Monday Peking would be forceful with foreigners who blocked Taiwan's reunification with the mainland.

Washington and Paris have recently sold jet fighters to Taiwan, which Peking considers a breakaway province.

Mr. Li took a generally conciliatory stance towards the Un-

Keating pledges to transform Australia into a republic

SYDNEY (R) — Prime Minister Paul Keating Monday pledged to begin transforming Australia into a republic with Britain's Queen Elizabeth replaced as head of state.

Speaking at his first news conference since crushing the pro-monarchy Liberal-National conservative opposition in an election last Saturday, Mr. Keating pledged to create a panel of eminent Australians to study how the country could become a republic. With an Australian head of state, by 2001.

This would coincide with the centenary of Australia's conversion from a group of colonies to a federation of states.

"The government has put to the Australian electorate a view that we should be masters of our own destiny — that the embodiment of the country ought to be visited upon an Australian and that this should best happen in the structure of a federal republic," he told reporters.

He promised a national debate and negotiation: "That's going to take some years, probably more than three."

Mr. Keating also foreshadowed a change in the Australian flag, a blue ensign with the southern cross constellation and Britain's Union Jack in the top left-hand corner.

"If Australia decided by referendum to become a republic, we would have, of course, no place whatsoever for the Union Jack in the corner of our flag," Mr. Keating said.

The Sydney Morning Herald newspaper said in a front page commentary Monday: "His (Keating's) win clearly marks the end of the old Australia tied to its British past. Mr. Keating has a mandate for pressing on towards the Australian republic, with a new Asian orientation and new national symbols, and he will."

The queen is Australia's titular head and has the power



Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating speaks at his first press conference in Sydney (AFP photo)

to dismiss any Australian government. Mr. Keating technically rules at the queen's pleasure, answering to her representative, Governor-General Bill Hayden.

That power was tested in 1975 when Governor-General Sir John Kerr dismissed the Labour government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, who refused to back down to an obstructionist senate that would not pass his government's budget bills.

The young Keating, a descendant of Irish settlers, had been a minister in the Whitlam government for only a few weeks before it was dissolved.

The day after toppling prime minister Bob Hawke in a party room challenge 14 months ago, Mr. Keating had the Australian flag removed from his official car.

An opinion poll during the campaign found 88 per cent of Australians supported forming a republic by 2001.

COLUMN OIIIIII

Aspin to get heart pacemaker

WASHINGTON (AP) — The secretary of defence says he'll probably receive a cardiac pacemaker within the next few weeks to help control a heart ailment. "The doctors are recommending it and I'm thinking about it. Probably yes," Les Aspin said in an interview with the NBC Broadcasting Network. Mr. Aspin, 54, spent five days in Georgetown University Medical Centre last month after complaining of shortness of breath. Mr. Aspin suffers from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a thickening of the heart walls that leads to reduced pumping efficiency. Doctors said the condition was not life threatening but said he needed a pacemaker and recommended he stop playing tennis and squash. Mr. Aspin responded affirmatively when asked whether the operation might take place in the next few weeks.

Zoo lays bare polar bear's mistaken identity

TOKYO (R) — When Yukio (Mr. Snowman) died in Tokyo aged thirty-something, his ministers finally confirmed what they had long suspected — the polar bear wasn't a he but a she. Yukio, Japan's oldest polar bear in captivity when it died Monday, came to Tokyo's Ueno Zoo in 1958 as a gift from the Moscow Bolshoi Circus. "The Russians told us then that the bear was about one year old and a male," a zoo spokesman said. "But the way Yukio acted — the way the bear urinated — made the keepers suspicious," he added. The spokesman said Yukio was a translation of the animal's Russian name.

Thieves sink Russian navy ship to steal parts

MOSCOW (R) — Thieves in the Russian military port of Baltisk sank a navy ship in shallow waters so they could be sure of stealing as many precious metal parts as possible, Commonwealth Television reported Sunday. The report, which showed a small destroyer half-submerged in the shallows, said one section of the port was full of wrecks which had been cannibalised by people making fortunes by selling the precious components for hard currency abroad. Baltisk, in the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad next to Poland and Lithuania, is closed to the public and the report indicated the sinking has been carried out by naval personnel. A lieutenant told the television crew that a report had been filed with the military prosecutor but no arrests had been made. Corruption is spreading quickly through the armed forces as living standards collapse. Defence Minister Pavel Grachev last month said a large part of the officer corps was sufficed with corruption and promised a ruthless crackdown. Earlier this year, an air force general in the Far East was charged with embezzling a fortune after he was caught using his heavy bomber fleet to shuttle wealthy entrepreneurs to China.

Grin and bear it

LONDON (R) — A British skier fought off a bear and wolves during two freezing nights alone on a Romanian mountain after becoming lost on the first day of a skiing holiday, the Sun newspaper reported Monday. The paper said that Rudy Gonsalves, 57, had been forced off the Lupului slope by a snow-flattening machine and careered into a ravine. He used survival techniques learned during conscription in Britain's military forces to dig snow shelters, but had to fight off the bear and three wolves with his skis before descending the mountain and being rescued by a farmer.

Albania's pill-box headache

TIRANA (R) — Albania wants to get rid of the 30,000 concrete bunkers that litter the country — a testament to the perverse military doctrine of late dictator Enver Hoxha. Mr. Hoxha built the pill-boxes in the 1970s, scattering them willy-nilly throughout this mountainous Balkan country, away from the borders where they would be most useful defensively. Defence Minister Safet Zhulali told reporters Friday he was looking for a partner to help demolish the bunkers. One attempt by an Italian firm to encourage Albanian peasants to grow mushrooms in the domed concrete structures failed, apparently because the peasants won't eat them.